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The Germs new "Germs G.I." debut album: a musical strip mine of the soul.

NEW STRAIN OF GERMS

BY R. MELTZER

"GERMS G.I." The Germs. Slash SR-103.

In 1967, the year new wave could easily have made its first official penetration (true!), there were only two combos of note with eyes beyond Eastern topicalities and compulsory 20-minute solos: the Velvet Underground and the Doors. Iggy in his pre-Pop incarnation eventually picked up their combined gauntlet of brutality aboriginal form/scathing inner vision, but even at its hottest his interpretation of the Velvet/Doors heart-of-darkness was disappointingly incomplete—albeit literal as heck.

OK, time marches on. We've finally got ourselves an actual new wave and all, and with this the Germs' debut LP one high-priority inevitability has at last been delivered: a musical strip-mine-of-the-soul that doesn't miss a beat at out-Iggying the Ig, then going beyond Mr. Stooge to his above-mentioned forebears and leaving them closely resembling mere cofee-table poets to boot.

From first hyper-moment to last, Darby Crash's vocalizings are impossible to follow without aid of the lyric sheet, and even then you're likely to throw in the towel. Words—as utterances, meanings, triggers—are just multi-edged touchstones in the rapid-fire excess of interactive human ritual, units of unedited inscription on the toilet paper of this here life. Out of this unrelenting stream of consciousness emerges a landscape of 24-hour fever dreams with non-sequitur dialectical twists that none of your serious writers (so-called) would ever submit to public scrutiny without embarrassment.

And because everything is so open-ended, you don't see Darby tripping over his metaphors as inescapable repositories of commitment the way Jim Morrison did. Every night is *not* an endless one-lane highway, a scenario of total-loss-or-nothing. Unrelieved anguish is still plenty rampant, but it's only one non-sacred station-of-his-cross among many, to be visited at one's biological whim before, during and after TV.

This valuable piece of vinyl is (1) the album of the year, (2) the most staggering recorded statement so far from the American branch of new wave, (3) the most remarkable L.A. studio achievement at least since "L.A. Woman" (1971). It's *that* great! □

ROCK MAGAZINES

Continued from Page 104

in stature from issue to issue. Direction is still primarily new wave, and some of the articles have a tendency to ramble rhapsodically over the latest cult band.

But its New York News column will give you all you need to name-drop intelligently about the local scene, while other columns cover the scene in other cities.

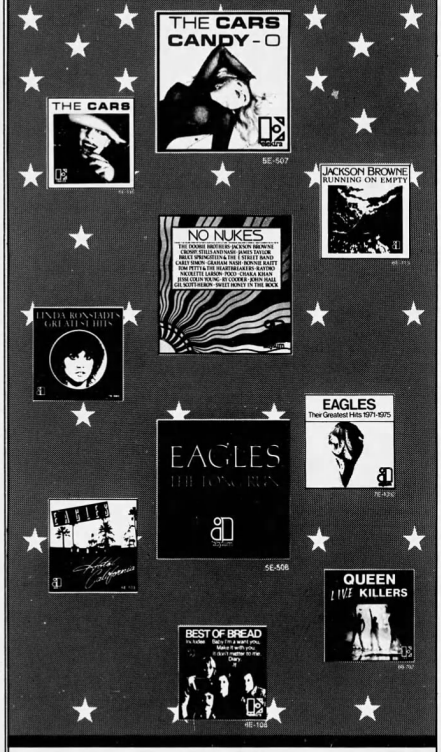
TROUSER PRESS (New York). Another former fanzine, formerly known as Trans-Oceanic Trouser Press. This magazine formerly concentrated exclusively on English rock artists, often obscure. But publisher Ira Robbins and editor Scott Isler have brought Trouser Press into the mainstream with a wider editorial base. There is plenty of English rock in the November issue, with articles on the Yachts, Magazine, Thin Lizzy and, traditional Trouser Press favorites, the Kinks. America is represented by articles on David Johansen, Talking Heads, the B-52s and the Modern Lovers—so you know Trouser Press has a new-wave orientation. The reviews, features and layout are clear and knowledgable. Despite its increasingly slickness, Trouser Press has maintained its refreshing enthusiasm.

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS (London). The English music weeklies (Melody Maker and Sounds in addition to New Musical Express) serve a much more immediate function than consumer music publications in the United States. In Britain, they take the place of FM radio in being the primary forum for exposure of artists and albums. For that reason, reviews in those publications are far more influential than in U.S. publications.

Of the three, New Musical Express has the most aggressive writing. Its staffers are notoriously fickle in their likes and dislikes; this week's hero will almost certainly be next week's fool. But at least the reading is always lively, and the writers strive for interesting, if extravagant, metaphors and reveal a more active wit than many of their counterparts in the United States and Britain. □

Robins is the pop music critic of Newsday.

The Season's Best.



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